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1 July 1992

The Right Hon. John Major MP,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom,
President of the European Community
c/o UK Embassy,
Lisbon

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

We are East Timorese refugees now forced to live in exile because our country has been illegally occupied by Indonesia for the past 16 years. Some of us are relatives of East Timorese who have been prosecuted in Indonesian lawcourts in Dili or Jakarta in the last few weeks.

We congratulate you as you take on the Presidency of the European Community and would like to convey to you our heartfelt concerns and hopes.

First, it pains us deeply that the Lisbon Summit held last week made no reference to the tragedy of our long-suffering people, even though the Indonesian government, our persecutor, is an important trading partner of almost all the EC countries. Some of us testified at the European Parliament Hearing on Human Rights in East Timor last April. Why were our grave concerns not reflected in the Final Communique of the EC Summit? We have heard that it may have been difficult for Portugal, as President, to push the question of East Timor because of its close involvement. If this is true, we urge you to take up the issue more forcefully than Portugal did during its Presidency. Our people desperately need your help, Sir.

Second, the British Government was one of the first EC countries to state its adherence to the principle of linking economic aid to the human rights record of the recipient country. We congratulate you for that, and sincerely hope that you will stand by this principle in your dealings with Indonesia which so brutally oppresses our people. We urge you to raise this at the Paris meeting of the Consultative Group for Indonesia and make it clear to Indonesia that British assistance will not be given until human rights abuses in East Timor end and our people can express their views on the future of our country.

Our third worry concerns the report we have seen that British Aerospace is planning to sell Indonesia forty Hawk fighter-trainers. As we understand it, the deal can only go ahead with a licence from the British Government. Please, Mr Prime Minister, remember that if you issue this licence, you will be supporting the Indonesian armed forces, the very body which so oppresses East Timor.

Finally, our personal concerns are profound. Our brothers, fathers, uncles and dear ones in Dili and Java have received harsh sentences merely for demonstrating peacefully on the streets of Jakarta and Dili. Two weeks ago, Francisco Miranda Branco was sentenced to fifteen years and yesterday, Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha was given a life sentence. Why are they being punished like this when in fact the guilty ones are the troops who opened fire on the demonstrators in Dili on 12 November killing nearly 200 of our people, and the officers who ordered them to open fire? The British Government and the European Community cannot remain silent while our dear ones are treated so harshly. Please use your distinguished position as British Prime Minister and as president of the European Community to condemn these sentences and call for the immediate release of all the East Timorese who have been convicted or held in prison since the tragic Santa Cruz Massacre on 12 November.

Our people are still suffering from that Massacre. The bodies of the dead have not yet been returned to the bereaved families. We are still a people in mourning. Please help us by speaking out.

Yours sincerely,